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India: Visa issuance procedures at the Canadian High Commission in India, including whether a third party can secure a visa for an applicant and whether the High Commission conducts security checks on applicants before issuing a visa (2005)

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Beginning on 9 March 2005, persons wishing to apply for a visa to enter Canada may submit their applications to any one of nine Visa Application Centres (VACs) located in the following cities in India: New Delhi, Jalandhar, Chandigarh, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Hyderabad, Bangalore and Kolkata (Canada 8 Mar. 2005). Prior to the establishment of the VACs, applicants were required to travel to the Canadian mission in New Delhi or in Chandigarh in order to submit applications, or to send them to these two locations by mail or through a travel agent (*ibid.*). Under the new procedure, staff at the VACs accept applications and provide advice to applicants while visa officers at the Canadian high commission in New Delhi and at the Canadian consulate general in Chandigarh continue to be responsible for assessing the applications (*ibid.*). Applicants may still submit completed applications to the high commission in New Delhi or to the consulate general in Chandigarh, between 11 a.m. and 12 p.m., from Monday to Thursday (*ibid.*). VACs are open from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. and from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., from Monday to Friday (*ibid.*). Applications may also be sent by mail (Canada 5 Dec. 2005).

To apply for a visa to Canada, applicants must submit the following documents: a temporary resident visa application form, three photographs meeting government of Canada specifications, personal information form, a representative form (IMM5476), proof of employment, letter from employer or school indicating permission for leave, and proof of funds (Canada 20 Feb. 2005). In addition, visitors must provide a letter of invitation or "statutory declaration of support," proof of immigration status of the inviter, and proof of funds of the inviter (*ibid.*). Applicants wishing to visit Canada must each pay a processing fee of CAN\$75 for single entry or CAN\$150 for multiple entry or CAN\$400 per family (Canada 9 Nov. 2005a). Fees are non-refundable in cases where applications are refused or withdrawn (*ibid.*).

On average, visitors' visas are issued within two working days of receipt of application, though according to the Website of the Canadian high commission in New Delhi, "[p]rocessing times vary from case to case, often due to reasons beyond [its] control" (9 Nov. 2005b). In correspondence to the Research Directorate, an official with the high commission pointed out that sending visa applications by mail to the high commission lengthens the issuance process (5 Dec. 2005).

The same official at the high commission stated that the decision to interview a visa applicant is left at the discretion of the screening officer and would be based on any number of reasons, such as doubts about the authenticity of documents (Canada 5 Dec. 2005). However, the majority of visa applicants are not interviewed (*ibid.*).

Regarding security checks, the official explained that applicants are not required to submit a police certificate unless "there is an indication that there has been a conviction" (*ibid.*). While "any case can be referred for security checks," this does not occur regularly (*ibid.*).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection.

References

Canada. 5 December 2005. Canadian High Commission, New Delhi. Correspondence from an official.

_____. 9 November 2005a. Canadian High Commission, New Delhi. "Immigration Cost Recovery Fees." <<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/new-delhi/fees-en.asp>> [Accessed 24 Nov. 2005]

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